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SUBJECT: EGYPT PLANS TO NOMINATE REPLACEMENT FOR UNAMID CHIEF OF STAFF

REF: KHARTOUM 650

¶1. (SBU) Egyptian Pol/Mil Officer Tamer Azzam told poloff on April 29 that Egypt plans to nominate an Egyptian BG to replace BG Patrick Davidson-Houston as UNAMID Chief of Staff. He said that Egypt hopes to have their nominee in place as early as May 18, pending approval by the UN.

¶2. (SBU) Separately, UNAMID Chief of Staff Davidson-Houston told Fieldoff that the assumption of his own imminent departure is premature. He said that the UN in New York plans to write a letter to the Government of Sudan (GOS) stating that it is actively recruiting a replacement for the COS but in the meantime it would be appropriate to keep the COS in place until the end of May, the half-way mark for his one year contract which ends in November. The COS said the GOS could outright reject the UN proposal, ignore it, or quietly go along with it.

¶3. (SBU) UNAMID leadership in El-Fasher told Fieldoff that they have no plans to engage with the GoS to counter Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's private agreement with the President Bashir at the Dakar summit. In reftel, post noted that the SYG, without consultation with DPKO or UNAMID, agreed with President Bashir to remove the COS by the end of April and accept an additional battalion from Egypt (making it the third largest TCC in the mission) and from Ethiopia. The current COS said UNAMID has been recruiting a replacement for him. He said he was unaware of the Egyptian proposal but unsurprised as the Egyptians have been lobbying for both the FC and DFC positions.

¶4. (SBU) Egyptian Pol/Miloff Azzam said he expected that the 130-troop Egyptian signals company would have its equipment in place by May 19 and that the 120-troop Egyptian transport company would have its equipment in place by May 12. He said that given the complete lack of preparations for the Egyptians in the Northern Sector, he doubted whether the infantry battalion would realistically be able to deploy before 2009, in keeping with FC Agwai's March agreement with the Egyptian MOD to deploy them at Um Kadada.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: The potential appointment of an Egyptian COS requires careful consideration. First, many IDPs and Darfuris consider the Egyptians as surrogates for the GOS and hence untrustworthy. Appointing an Egyptian COS could severely damage UNAMID's credibility in the eyes of most Darfuris if the candidate is not an exceptional individual willing to correct this impression. In addition, the current UNAMID leadership considers that the quality of leadership and management provided by an Egyptian COS may not be adequate.

¶6. (SBU) RECOMMENDATION: Given the likely negative reception of the

Egyptian troops, post suggests that the appointment of an Egyptian COS should be avoided if possible. We recommend that USUN consider discrete discussions with the SYG on his apparent unilateral decisions on peacekeeping troops. The FC appears unable to stand up to the SYG to pre-empt an Egyptian appointment that would hurt the mission (rumor has it the FC is trying to secure his own appointment as Military Advisor at UN HQ and is accordingly towing a conservative line vis-`-vis the SYG and the GoS). Therefore, Post suggests that the Friends of UNAMID could intervene with the SYG to make sure he is properly consulting both UN HQ and UNAMID before making decisions that could undermine the Darfur mission - and set a bad precedent on TCC decisions for future peacekeeping missions.

FERNANDEZ